

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1722

To amend the Mineral Leasing Act to increase the maximum acreage of Federal leases for sodium that may be held by an entity in any 1 State, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER 13, 1999

Mr. THOMAS (for himself and Mr. ENZI) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

A BILL

To amend the Mineral Leasing Act to increase the maximum acreage of Federal leases for sodium that may be held by an entity in any 1 State, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. TITLE.**

4 This Act shall be entitled the “Trona Market Com-
5 petition Act of 1999”.

6 **SEC. 2. SODIUM MINING ON FEDERAL LAND.**

7 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

1 (1) Federal land contains commercial deposits
2 of trona, the world’s largest deposits of trona being
3 located on Federal land in southwestern Wyoming;

4 (2) trona is mined on Federal land through
5 Federal sodium leases under the Act of February
6 25, 1920 (commonly known as the “Mineral Leasing
7 Act”) (30 U.S.C. 181 et seq.);

8 (3) the primary product of trona mining is soda
9 ash (sodium carbonate), a basic industrial chemical
10 that is used for glassmaking and a variety of con-
11 sumer products, including baking soda, detergents,
12 and pharmaceuticals;

13 (4) the Mineral Leasing Act sets for each
14 leasable mineral a limitation on the amount of acre-
15 age of Federal leases any 1 producer may hold in
16 any 1 State or nationally;

17 (5)(A) the present acreage limitation for Fed-
18 eral sodium leases has been in place for over 5 dec-
19 ades, since 1948, and is the oldest acreage limitation
20 in the Mineral Leasing Act;

21 (B) over that time, Congress or the Bureau of
22 Land Management has revised the acreage limits ap-
23 plicable to other minerals to meet the needs of the
24 respective industries; and

1 (C) currently the sodium lease acreage limit of
2 15,360 acres per State is approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ of the
3 per-State Federal lease acreage limit for coal
4 (46,080 acres) and potassium (51,200 acres) and
5 $\frac{1}{16}$ of the per-State Federal lease acreage limit for
6 oil and gas (246,080 acres);

7 (6) 3 of the 4 trona producers in Wyoming are
8 operating mines on Federal leaseholds that contain
9 total acreage close to the sodium lease acreage ceil-
10 ing;

11 (7) the same reasons that Congress cited in en-
12 acting increases per State lease acreage caps appli-
13 cable in the case of other minerals—the advent of
14 modern mine technology, changes in industry eco-
15 nomics, greater global competition, and the need to
16 conserve Federal resources—apply to trona;

17 (8) existing trona mines require additional lease
18 acreage to avoid premature closure, but those mines
19 cannot relinquish mined-out areas to lease new acre-
20 age because those areas continue to be used for mine
21 access, ventilation, and tailings disposal and may
22 provide future opportunities for secondary recovery
23 by solution mining;

24 (9) to enable them to make long-term business
25 decisions affecting the type and amount of additional

1 infrastructure investments, trona producers need
2 certainty that sufficient acreage of leasable trona
3 will be available for mining in the future; and

4 (10) to maintain the vitality of the domestic
5 trona industry and ensure the continued flow of val-
6 uable revenues to the Federal and State govern-
7 ments and of products to the American public from
8 trona production on Federal land, the Mineral Leas-
9 ing Act should be amended to increase the acreage
10 limitation for Federal sodium leases.

11 (b) AMENDMENT.—Section 27(b)(2) of the Act of
12 February 25, 1920 (30 U.S.C. 184(b)(2)), is amended by
13 striking “fifteen thousand three hundred and sixty acres”
14 and inserting “30,720 acres”.

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